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WHO ASSIGNMENT

Family Planning – India and China

Family Planning is the use of various techniques to control the childbirth. It allows the couples to plan and decide the number of children they wish to have and timing of child birth which helps not only in the proper nourishment of the child but ensures safety and success of each pregnancy.

Family planning has numerous benefits. Various resources are required for the upbringing of a child and it is essential to ensure that family has sufficient resources available to cater the needs of the new born. It can enable women to delay or restrict pregnancy when it can be a risk to their health either because they are too young or too old. Young mothers are vulnerable to pregnancy-induced hypertension, while older women have tendency to uterine rupture during labor, both of which may result in maternal death. Further, well planned pregnancies and births can help reduce world's infant mortality rate. By limiting the size of family, parents can pay more attention to the wellbeing of their children. Not only individual level, family planning contributes to the sustainable economy of the country. Having scarce resources, keeping the population growth low is essential for a country. **Where does this info come from? (this was my own opinion, a country not having sufficient resources, high population would result in high demand for resources and less resources available to people)**

The world's population currently stands at approximately 7.2 billion. The major contribution in this population is of China (approx. 1.4 billion) and India (approx. 1.2 billion). According to an article by Amrutha Gayathri in International Business Times on 17 June 2013, "India's population will grow while China's will begin to decline by 2028, making India world's most populous country in about 15 years, UN report says" (Gayathri, 2013). While China and India both have taken strong measures to control their population growth through the forced and encouraged use of contraceptive methods, population growth of the two countries is still a concern.

The question here arises why the two countries face such high rate of population growth? Among other reasons like religious issues, one common reason is that family planning in both the countries faced criticism and opposition for many years and it took a while for people to understand the need for family planning. The two countries chose different approaches to family planning and therefore the results of the

two approaches differ from each other significantly.

In order to alleviate social and economic problems of China, Government introduced One-Child policy to control population growth of the country. As per the policy, the couples are allowed to have only one child with some exceptions and exemptions. Although the policy has faced criticism worldwide, about 76% of the Chinese population supports the policy according to the survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre in 2008. The policy had many implications both negative and positive (PewResearch, 2008).

People who prefer male babies to females went for abortions every time they are expecting baby girl and many abandoning them, offering them for legal or illegal adoptions and even selling them as the sex selected abortions, abandonments and infanticide are illegal in China. This has created sex-based birth rate disparity. Another problem faced by the Chinese was 4-2-1 problems. As every couple is allowed only one child, that child, having no siblings, when grow up shall have to support his two parents and sometimes his four grandparents (Wen, 2008). This has resulted in increase in dependency ratio.

Despite the strict implementation of the policy, Google's 'World Development Indicators' shows that fertility rate in China have increased from 1.51 births per woman in 2000 to 1.66 in 2011. Still compared to 1980, it has fallen drastically from 2.63 births per woman (Google Public Data, 2009). The policy come along with schemes of cash bonuses and better access to housing. China's economic growth has been rapid in the last decade, the major reason being the availability of cheap and abundant labor workforce. But the decreasing birth rate and aging population might have adverse effects on its economic growth.

Unlike a communist country like China, neighboring country India being a democratic has approached differently to family planning and population growth control. The family planning in India is mainly dependent on Government's sponsorship for which a separate unit 'Ministry of Health and Family Affair' is established. It is responsible for formation and executions of Government plans related to Family Planning. India was the country to have a family planning policy, which is known as "First Five Year Plan". According to this plan, family planning clinics were built across the country. However, the plan remained unsuccessful. Due to illiteracy, non-awareness and ignorance, majority of the people did not attend those clinics. Indian Government's policies continued to fail until in 1970s Government introduced 'The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971'. Under this act, except in certain areas, abortions

were allowed in the first three months of pregnancy. Various steps were taken to encourage education of women regarding the need of family planning and contraception methods.

Very often, women in India opt for sterilization without knowing the health risks associated with it. Sterilization is a birth control technique, which eliminates the persons' ability to reproduce and give birth. In past, Government of India has set targets for sterilizations and provided financial incentives to health workers who met those targets. But due to criticism by Human Rights Watch, the government declared target free approaches. In 2000, National Commission on Population introduced a plan known as 'National Population Plan'. The plan is set to introduce safe contraception methods, create awareness among people and provide reproductive health care to them. The Commission is of the view that if the policy turns out successful in achieving its objectives, India's population will be sustainable by 2045.

Use of contraceptive method has increased over the years from 13% in 1970 to 35% in 1997 and 48% in 2009 (Rengel, 2000). While India faces problems of overpopulation and is set to beat China in the race, it has still managed to decrease its fertility rate from 5.6 in 1966 to 2.7 in 2009 (Ramu, 2006; WHO, 2003).

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